Eliz.th Adam

A LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH of ENGLAND.

PROVING,

I. The Lawfulneſs of Separation from the Church of *England.*

II. The Validity of Preſbyterian Ordination.

By A LOVER OF TRUTH.

He that is firſt in his own Cauſe, ſeemeth juſt; but his Neighbour cometh and ſearcheth him.

Prov. xviii. 17.

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A LETTER TO THE PEOPLE of the *Church* of *England.*

GENTLEMEN,

I Beg the Favour of you to give yourſelves the Trouble *carefully* to read over theſe Lines, and *impartially* to conſider what you read.

I hope I can truly ſay that Zeal for *Truth* and *Holineſs*, and Concern for your Soul's Welfare, put me upon writing to you.

You blame the *Proteſtant Diſſenters* for ſeparating from you, but I juſtify them, becauſe, I apprehend, they have juſt Cauſe to *ſeparate.*

You count the *Diſſenting Miniſters* have no *lawful Call* to preach the Word, and adminiſter the Sacraments, becauſe they are not ordained by your *Biſhops*; but I count they have a *lawful Call* notwithſtanding, becauſe your *Biſhops* have no Authority from *Chriſt* or his *Apoſtles* to claim the *ſole* Power of Ordination.

The Deſign of this Letter is 1ſt, To prove the Lawfulneſs of *ſeparating* from the Church of *England*. 2dly. To prove the Validity of Preſbyterian Ordination.

1ſt. I ſhall endeavour to prove the Lawfulneſs of *Separation* from the Church of *England*. *i. e.* from the worſhipping Aſſemblies of the eſtabliſh'd Church.

The *Proteſtant Diſſenters* in *England* have good Reaſon to produce for their worſhipping God in *ſeparate* Aſſemblies.

They worſhip the *ſame* God, and believe in the *ſame* Saviour that you do; they profeſs the ſame Goſpel, and partake of the *ſame* Sacraments that you do: This you cannot deny. But they will not ſubmit to the *Forms* and *Ceremonies* of your Church, becauſe they know your *Biſhops* cannot produce any Scripture Warrant, *i. e.* Scripture Precept or Example for the Impoſition of them, and they can ſee no *juſt* Reaſon why fallible *Men* ſhould impoſe Terms of Church-Communion, which *God* has not impoſed. They will not ſubmit to unſcriptural Impoſitions, becauſe they would keep cloſe to the Scripture Rule.

They are juſtly offended with your *God-Fathers* and *God-Mothers*; becauſe they judge 'tis moſt reaſonable that the Parents themſelves ſhould dedicate their own Children in Baptiſm; and they cannot ſee how the Parents can *lawfully* give away their Right

Right to others. And they think it a very ridiculous Cuſtom for Perſons to engage for the religious Education of Children, (as ſome do) whom they are never likely to ſee any more in all their Life.

They think it very unreaſonable to require *kneeling* at the *Lord's-Supper*, or to deny the Ordinance to thoſe that ſcruple that Poſture, ſeeing 'tis evident that *Chriſt* and the *Apoſtles* receiv'd it ſitting. See *Matt.* xxvi. 20, 26.

They are offended with your Clergy for endeavouring to make them believe that *Biſhops* are, by *divine Appointment*, *ſuperior* to *Preſbyters*; ſince 'tis evident from Scripture that *Biſhop* and *Preſbyter* are two *Names* expreſſive of the *ſame* Office, as I hope to prove by and by. And they think it very ſtrange that a Man ſhould be call'd a Biſhop, or Overſeer of *more* Churches, than he is able *perſonally* to overſee; ſtrange! that a Man in *England* ſhould be call'd a Biſhop of Churches in *America*, a Biſhop of Perſons that he never ſaw, nor is ever likely to ſee in all his Life.

They are highly offended with your ſtrange Notion that a Perſon is regenerated in Baptiſm, and made a Child of God, and a Member of Chriſt: They are ſure that all baptized Perſons are not regenerated, *i. e.* renewed unto Holineſs, and what elſe you

mean by Regeneration they cannot underſtand.

They think it very odd for a God-Father to promiſe that a Child ſhall *renounce the Devil, the World, and the Fleſh*; very odd to promiſe for another, what no Man can perform for himſelf.

They cannot ſee how your Clergy can ſay with Truth, that *it has pleaſed God of his great Mercy to take unto himſelf the Soul* of every one whom they bury. Does God *of his great Mercy take unto himſelf* the Souls of thoſe that die in their Sins?

They are juſtly offended with many of your Clergy for preaching contrary to your own Articles, (as 'tis well known many of them do.) Are not the Doctrines of particular Election, Juſtification by an imputed Righteouſneſs, Effectual Grace, Perſeverence of Saints, *&c.* all Doctrines of the Church of *England?* And do not many of your Clergy preach contrary to theſe Doctrines? To ſubſcribe the Articles of the Church to qualify themſelves for a Living, and afterwards to preach quite contrary to theſe Articles, and make a Jeſt of them, is (they judge) a Piece of daring Impiety. How can a Clergyman of the Church of *England* (for Shame) make a Jeſt of the *Calviniſt* Doctrines, when they are the Doctrines of the Church! Are they *moved by the*

the Holy Ghoſt to ſubſcribe Lies at their Ordination?

The Diſſenters think it their Duty to join in Communion with ſeparate Aſſemblies, where they judge they can receive more ſpiritual Benefit than in yours, and have the Word and Sacraments purely adminiſtred according to Chriſt's Appointment, without the Mixture of your unſcriptural Rites and Ceremonies. They think it their Duty to prefer the Inſtitutions of Chriſt before the Inventions of Men. See *Matt.* xv. 9. and *Col.* ii. 22.

They are highly offended with your Clergy for knowingly admitting the Ignorant and openly Wicked and Profane to the Lord's Supper; which they count a horrid Prophanation of that holy Ordinance.

They are offended with your *Miniſters*, for appropriating the Title of *Clergy* to themſelves, becauſe that Title is given to the Chriſtian People in Scripture, where they are called *God's Heritage*, or *Clergy*, (as 'tis in the Original) 1 *Pet.* v. iii. *i. e.* his peculiar Lot, choſen out of the common Multitude for his own People: And this Title is never given to *Miniſters* in all the Scripture, as far as I can remember.

To ſpeak *properly*, Proteſtant Diſſenters do not ſeparate from the *Church*, for they hold faſt the Doctrines of the *Church*, but they ſeparate from the Corruptions of the *Church*;

Church; and will you blame them for that? Pray, tell me, Gentlemen, which are the worſt Separatiſts, thoſe that make a Jeſt of the Doctrines of your *Church*, and yet have the Aſſurance to call themſelves *Church-men*; or thoſe that hold faſt theſe Doctrines, and differ from you *only* in Forms and Ceremonies, that have no Foundation in the Word of God: Are not thoſe that ſeparate themſelves from God, and Chriſt, and his Church, to the Devil, World, and Fleſh, by their ungodly Courſes, and vicious Practices, a great deal worſe than thoſe that ſeparate from any particular Branch of the viſible Church, on account of Opinions, or Modes and Circumſtances of external Government or Worſhip, (tho' many can patiently bear with the former, while they are plentifully railing at the latter.)

How can your Clergy blame the Diſſenters for ſeparating from the Church, when they themſelves *force* them to ſeparate, by impoſing Terms of Communion, which they dare not comply with, for Fear of offending God?

Is it any Wonder that the Diſſenters diſſent from the Canons of the Church, when your own Clergy do diſſent from them? Your own Clergy, 'tis well known, do tranſgreſs many of the Canons of the Church, as Mr. *James Owen* in his Treatiſe called *Separation without Schiſm*, has largely proved.

Your

Your Clergy are pleaſed to call the Diſſenters *Schiſmaticks* for *ſeparating* from your Places of Worſhip, but 'tis not what *they* are pleaſed to call *Schiſm*, but what *God* calls *Schiſm* in his Word that is a damning Sin. So that when your Clergy brand the Diſſenters with the odious Name of *Schiſmaticks*, and pronounce a Sentence of Damnation upon them as ſuch, they are not at all mov'd with it. That which the Spirit of God calls *Schiſm*, is a Breach of Chriſtian Unity, by the Uncharitableneſs and Alienation of Affection, eſpecially if it grows up to Diſcord, and Feuds, and Contentions. There may be Schiſm, where there's no Separation of Communion. Perſons may come together in the ſame Church, and yet are charged with *Diviſions* or *Schiſms*, as 'tis in the Original, 1 *Cor.* xi. 18; becauſe, inſtead of concurring unanimouſly in celebrating the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper, they fell a quarrelling with one another. That *Schiſm* in the Body which muſt be avoided (1 *Cor.* xii. 25) is plainly Want of Charity or Concern for each other's Welfare, a Rupture or Diſ-union among the Members of a Church, who ſhould be cloſely united by the ſtrongeſt Bands of Love. All Decays of this Affection are the Seeds of *Schiſm*. When Chriſtians grow cold towards each other, they will be careleſs and unconcern'd for each other: And this mutual

tual Diſregard is a *Schiſm* begun. Pray tell me, Gentlemen, which you do think are the *Schiſmatics*, whom the Spirit of God condemns, thoſe that peaceably ſeparate from your Church for Conſcience Sake, or thoſe that burden the Church with dividing and offending Impoſitions, who introduce and propagate dividing and offending Notions, which are erroneous or juſtly ſuſpected; who, by perverſe Diſputings, Cenſures, and evil Surmiſes, alienate the Affections of Chriſtians one from another. Pray read and conſider *Rom.* xvi. 17, 18.

2dly. I come to prove the Validity of Preſbyterian Ordination.

By *Preſbyterian Ordination*, I mean Ordination perform'd by Preſbyters, or Proteſtant Diſſenting Miniſters.

The Proteſtant Diſſenters will readily agree with you Gentlemen of the eſtabliſh'd Church, that none ought to take upon them the Office of the Miniſtry, but thoſe that are lawfully call'd and ſent; for *How ſhall they preach, unleſs they be ſent?* Rom. x. 15. *i. e.* except they be both commiſſion'd, and in ſome Meaſure qualified for their preaching Work. This proves that to the regular Miniſtry then muſt be a regular Miſſion and Ordination; for, *No Man taketh this Honour to himſelf*, (*i. e.* No Man can lawfully take upon him the Office

of

of the Miniſtry) *But he that was called of God, as was* Aaron, Heb. v. 4. He is not a lawful Miniſter, but an Intruder who is not called of God.

I hope you will own, Gentlemen, that thoſe *only* are *God*'s Miniſters, who are *ſent* by *God*, and that all who are ſent of *God*, do preach the *Doctrine* of *God*; you may aſſure yourſelves that *God* has not ſent thoſe Miniſters that don't preach his Doctrine.

Pray, obſerve, all who are ſent by the *Biſhop*, are not ſent by *God*; for many of thoſe that are ſent by the *Biſhop*, do not preach the Doctrine of *God*, according to your own Confeſſion; many of you complaining that your Miniſters do not preach the Truth.

I hope you will grant that a Man may be ſent by *God*, whom the *Biſhop* refuſes to ſend. Otherwiſe, a divine Miſſion muſt depend on the Will and Pleaſure of the Biſhop, which is, in Effect, to make the Biſhop infallible, nay, to ſet him above God.

Now ſuppoſing a Man is ſent by *God* to preach, muſt he forbear preaching, *meerly* becauſe the *Biſhop* will not ſend him. Pray tell me, Gentlemen, which is the Miniſter of *God*, he that is ordain'd by the *Biſhop*, but does not preach the Doctrine of *God*; or he that is not ordain'd by the *Biſhop*, but preaches the Doctrine of God.

Are any of you ſo pitifully ignorant as to imagine that the *Biſhop*'s laying his Hands on

on a Man's Head will make him a Miniſter of God?

You will not hear diſſenting Miniſters, tho' you yourſelves own they preach the Doctrine of *God*, becauſe you ſay they are not *Church* of *England* Miniſters; but pray tell me, which are Church of *England* Miniſters, thoſe Miniſters who, tho' they do not ſeparate from the Walls of the Houſe, yet diſſent from, and preach down the Doctrines of the Church of *England*; or thoſe who, tho' they ſeparate from the Walls of the Houſe, yet preach up the Doctrines of the Church of *England*? Is not the Doctrine, the Life and Soul of the Church (the Ceremonies without the Doctrine are only the Carcaſe.) And may not thoſe be juſtly call'd Church of *England* Miniſters, who preach up the Doctrines of the Church of *England*?

You will not hear Diſſenting Miniſters, becauſe they don't preach in your Churches; but pray whoſe Fault is that? They would gladly preach in the great Houſes, but your *Biſhops* will not ſuffer them: Your *Biſhops* will not ordain them, and therefore they apply to *other Biſhops* for Ordination, who, they are perſuaded, have as good Authority as *yours*.

You ſay that your Churches are the *only* lawful Places of Publick Worſhip in *England*, and blame thoſe that ſeparate from them,

them, and brand them with the odious Name of *Schiſmatics*; but, pray, tell me, How came your Places of Worſhip to be any more holy than *theirs?* Or where do you read in all the Scripture, that ſeparating from your Aſſemblies is called *Schiſm?* Does not our Saviour ſay to the Woman of *Samaria*, *Believe me*, the Hour cometh, *When you ſhall neither in this Mountain, nor at Jeruſalem worſhip the Father?* John iv. 21. The publick Worſhip of God is not now under the Goſpel appropriated to any Place, as it was under the Law to the Temple of *Solomon*; but 'tis God's Will that *Men pray every where*, 1 Tim. ii. 8. Mal. i. 11. And did not our Saviour preach in a Mountain, a Ship, *&c.* as well as in a Synagogue. 'Tis true, we ſhould conſult Decency and Conveniency as much as poſſible, in the Places of our Worſhip; but then we muſt give no Preference to one Place above another, in reſpect of Holineſs and Acceptableneſs to God. What pitiful Ignorance and Prejudice it is to prefer any Worſhip, merely for the Sake of the Houſe or Building in which it is performed, tho' it were as magnificent as ever *Solomon*'s Temple was?

The Church of *England*, in one of her Canons excommunicates all that ſpeak againſt her Articles. Many that go under the Name of Church of *England* Miniſters,

'tis well known, ſpeak againſt the Articles of the Church, by ſpeaking againſt the Doctrines contained in them. But how can you call theſe Church of *England* Miniſters, whom the Church of *England* excommunicates, or caſts out of her Communion?

You will not go to hear what many of you yourſelves own to be good edifying Preaching, when it is preached in a Meeting-Houſe; but you can ſwallow down what many of yourſelves call poor unedifying Stuff, when 'tis preach'd at Church. What abominable Partiality is this! Is not this to *ſtrain at a Gnat, and ſwallow a Camel?* You will not take good Nouriſhing Food when it comes from the Hands of a Diſſenting Miniſter; but you will take any Thing when it comes from a Church Miniſter. You will do well to conſider how you will anſwer it at the Great Day. Do you think to come off, (I would put it cloſe to your Conſcience) do you think to come off by ſaying, Lord, 'tis true, I had an Opportunity of hearing thy Word preached, but I would not go to hear it, becauſe it was preached in a Meeting-Houſe, by one that was not ordained by a *Biſhop*. Do you think ſuch a frivolous Excuſe will be admitted at the Bar of God. I intreat you, O! I intreat you, for the Lord's Sake, and for your poor Soul's Sake, to conſider this

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ſeriouſly, in Time, before it be too late. Don't you think it your Duty to attend that Miniſtry by which you can receive moſt Benefit and Advantage for your Souls, (Inſtruction and Edification of Souls being the great End of Preaching) and are any of you ſo ſtupid as to imagine this to be a ſufficient Reaſon for not attending ſuch a Miniſtry, becauſe you cannot enjoy it without going to a Meeting-Houſe. Be not deceived, God will not be mocked with ſuch poor frivolous Excuſes.

Perhaps ſome of you are under a great Concern about the State of your Souls; you go to Church, but complain you can't profit by what you hear there; a Friend, perhaps, adviſes you to go to Meeting, where you may profit better; but you won't hearken to that, from a fooliſh and groundleſs Conceit, that Diſſenting Miniſters have no Call to preach.

But pray what do you mean by a *Call* to preach? If you mean the Biſhop's Call, I know they have not that; but if you mean *God*'s *Call*, they can give as good Evidences of their having that as your Miniſters.

The Diſſenting Miniſters are as well qualified for the Office of the Miniſtry, in reſpect of Learning and Piety, as your Miniſters. This you cannot deny, if you will judge impartially. They are as well quali-

fied in reſpect of Miniſterial Gifts and Abilities, and Faithfulneſs in the Diſcharge of their Office, and Soundneſs of Doctrine, as your Miniſters. This you cannot deny, if you will judge impartially.

They are ordain'd, according to the Scripture-Rule, with the *Laying on of the Hands of the Preſbytery*, i. e. a Company of Preſbyters, 1 *Tim.* iv. 14. and with *Faſting and Prayer*, according to Scripture Example, *Acts*, xiii. 3. 'Tis true, 'tis *God*'s Prerogative to ſend Miniſters, *he is the Lord of the Harveſt*, and therefore, to him we muſt pray that *he would ſend forth Labourers*, Mat. ix. *ult.* He only can qualify Men for, and incline them to the Work of the Miniſtry: But the Competency of that Qualification, and the Sincerity of that Inclination, muſt not be left to the Judgment of every Man for himſelf: The Nature of the Thing will by no means admit that; but for the Preſervation of due Order in the Church, this muſt needs be referred and ſubmitted to the Judgment of a competent Number of thoſe that are themſelves in that Office, and of approved Wiſdom and Experience in it; who, as in all other Callings, are preſumed the moſt able Judges; and who are impowered to ſet apart ſuch as they find ſo qualified and inclined to this Work of the Miniſtry. See 2 *Tim.* ii. 2. The Diſſenting Mini-

Miniſters are ordain'd and ſet apart for the Office of the Miniſtry by thoſe that are themſelves in that Office. They don't intrude themſelves into the Miniſtry any more than your Miniſters do. Their Ordainers have a Power to ordain as much as your Biſhops, notwithſtanding their claiming the *ſole* Power of Ordination.

Your Biſhops would make us believe that the Order and Office of a Biſhop is by divine Appointment, ſuperior to that of a Preſbyter. But they have never yet prov'd it.

'Tis true, we read of *Biſhops* in Scripture; but the *Scripture Biſhops* were not your Sort of Biſhops, who pretend to a Power over *Preſbyters*, and their Congregations; which, I am perſuaded, God never gave them; but only Paſtors of *ſingle* Congregations. The Miniſters of the Church at *Philippi*, are called *Biſhops* by St. *Paul*, *Phil.* i. 1. every lawful Miniſter is a Biſhop. There are but two ſtanding Offices in the Church, that I know of, that are of divine Appointment, *viz. Biſhops* and *Deacons*, *Phil.* i. 1. The Office of a *Biſhop* is to *teach* and *rule*. *Heb.* xiii. 7, 17. The Office of a Deacon is to diſtribute the Church's Alms to the Poor. *Acts* vi. 2, 3.

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The Truth is, *Biſhop* and *Preſbyter* are two Names for the *ſame* Office, as is evident from *Acts* xx. 17 and 28 Verſes compared, where the *Elders* or *Preſbyters* of the Church of *Epheſus*, are called *Overſeers* or *Biſhops*; and from *Tit.* i. 5, 7. where *Elder* and *Biſhop* are made the ſame, otherwiſe the Apoſtle's Reaſoning there is of no Force. And whoſoever ſhall conſider that the ſame Characters and *Titles*, the ſame *Qualifications*, the ſame Acts of Office, and the ſame *Honour* and Reſpect, are every where aſcribed throughout the New Teſtament, to thoſe who are called *Biſhops* and *Preſbyters*, as ſome of your own Writers allow, will find it difficult to make them a different *Office*, or diſtinct *Order* of Miniſtry in the Days of the Apoſtles.

Miniſters of the Goſpel are called *Preſbyters* or *Elders*, becauſe they do or ſhould reſemble Elders or aged Perſons in Wiſdom, Experience, Gravity, *&c.* and *Biſhops* or *Overſeers*, becauſe they have the Overſight and Charge of Souls.

And where can you find in all the Scripture that a *Biſhop* is ſuperior to a *Preſbyter?*

And ſeeing a *Preſbyter* is equal to a *Biſhop*, a *Preſbyter* has as much a Power to ordain as a *Biſhop*. Therefore the Diſſenting *Miniſters*, who are ordained by *Preſbyters*, have

have as valid an Ordination as your Miniſters who are ordained by *Biſhops*.

I can't ſee how any of your Clergy can prove the Lawfulneſs of his Miniſtry upon the Footing of *Epiſcopal* Ordination, ſince in Order to that, I apprehend he muſt not only prove that the Perſon, who ordained him, was a lawful Biſhop; but that the Ordainer of his Ordainer, was alſo a lawful Biſhop; and ſo on in an uninterrupted Succeſſion from the Apoſtles. But where is the Clergyman who can do that?

Some of your *Clergy*, inſtead of convincing the Diſſenters, do but make themſelves ridiculous, by comparing their Miniſters to *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, whom the Earth ſwallowed up alive for rebelling againſt *Moſes* and *Aaron*; but they ſhould firſt prove that your *Biſhops* have as good Authority as *Moſes* and *Aaron*. This ſilly Notion, that owns no Church, or Call, or Miniſtry, or Sacraments, without a *Biſhop*'s Ordination; that makes the Validity of a Miniſter's Ordination to depend upon a mere Formality, *viz.* the Laying on of the Hand of a *Biſhop*, and a Formality too for which no Divine Authority can be produced: I ſay, this ſilly Notion is fitter to be banter'd than reaſon'd with; and I cannot help having a Contempt of thoſe kind of Thoughts, and a Compaſſion for thoſe poor

poor Creatures that fill their Heads with them.

Your Clergy will not own the Validity of the Ordination of Proteſtant Diſſenters, but they will readily own the Validity of the Ordinations of the Church of *Rome*, who are ſworn Enemies to the Reformation. This is unaccountable.

The Diſſenting Miniſters do not apply to your *Biſhops* for *Ordination*, for they know their Lordſhips will not ordain them, becauſe they will not ſubmit to the Ceremonies of your Church. And can you blame them for that, when they judge theſe Ceremonies *unlawful*, or at leaſt ſcruple the *Lawfulneſs* of them? Is not that a ſufficient Reaſon for not complying with your Terms of Church-Communion, when they are not ſatisfied as to the Lawfulneſs of them? Does not the Apoſtle tell us, that *whatſoever is not of Faith, is Sin*, Rom. xiv. 23. *i. e.* whatever is done, while we are not clearly perſuaded of the Lawfulneſs of it, is a Sin againſt Conſcience? And I aſſure ye, 'tis a dangerous Thing to ſin againſt Conſcience.

What Power ſoever Miniſters receive from God, is for *Edification*, not for *Deſtruction*, 2 *Cor.* xiii. 10. But is this for *Edification* to impoſe Terms of Church-Communion upon Perſons, which they ſcruple

ſcruple the Lawfulneſs of? Is this for *Edification* to deny Ordination to thoſe that are well qualified for the Office of the Miniſtry for no other Reaſon but becauſe they will not ſin againſt their own Conſcience, by complying with Terms of Church-Communion, which they are not ſatisfied about the Lawfulneſs of; and to deprive the Church of the Labours of many worthy Miniſters who are forc'd to preach in ſeparate Aſſemblies? Is this for Edification, nay is it not a Piece of Cruelty to the Church to ſend forth ſcandalous Perſons into the Miniſtry (as you know, too too many of your Clergy are) and are any of you ſo weak as to imagine that the laying on of the Hands of a Biſhop will make a ſcandalous Perſon a Miniſter of God.

You ſay, your Biſhops are the Succeſſors of the Apoſtles; but you ſhould conſider that the Apoſtles as Apoſtles have no Succeſſors. I hope you will not ſay that your Biſhops were immediately call'd of God as the *Apoſtles* were, or have a Power to work Miracles as the Apoſtles had. But every lawful Miniſter is a Succeſſor to the Apoſtles, conſidering them only as Miniſters, as much as a Biſhop. What your Biſhops have advanced to prove the divine Original of *Dioceſan Epiſcopacy*, has been ſolidly anſwered and confuted by Mr. *Calderwood* in his *Altare Damaſcenum*; Mr. *Pierce* in his Vindication

Vindication of the Diſſenters againſt Dr. *Nichols*, and his Remarks on Dr. *Wells*'s Letters, Mr. *Boyſe* in his clear Account of the ancient *Epiſcopacy*, Mr. *Jameſon* in his *Epiſcopal* Controverſy, and ſeveral other learned Writers.

FINIS.

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